



We are a not for profit stewardship organization working towards a healthy, productive, and diverse Tsolum River. Our charity works with all levels of government and the community.

## Winter 2018 Newsletter

BOX 488 MERVILLE BC VOR 2M0

### Giving Thanks to our Supporters

By Wayne White and Caroline Heim

At this time of year we would like to extend a warm thank you to all of our generous supporters. It is through your generosity that we are able to undertake our projects throughout the year, and to keep our organization thriving.

Special thanks to Dick Bradshaw, Judy (and Bob) Hager, Dr. D. Morwood, Shelterwood Forest Management, Classroom Connections, Marine Harvest, and TimberWest. We would also like to thank Anne Davies and friends/family of Stewart Duncan who made contributions to our society in memory of Stewart over the past year.

In 2017 we received help from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) and Knappett Industries on the Wiley bank stabilization project, and we benefited from reduced rates from J.R. Edgett Excavating and Dave Gooding Engineering. We are thankful for non-profit grants received from Recreation Fisheries Conservation Partnerships Program (RFCPP) and Habitat Conservation Trust Fund (HCTF), which were used for the T-9/10 and Dove Creek projects. The CVRD has supported us through an annual Grant-in-aid and BC Gaming has been very generous to us over the years.

Environment Canada, TD Friends of the Environment, BC Ministry of Environment (MoE), Pacific Salmon Foundation (PSF), Shell Canada, and the Mclean Foundation have been consistent supporters of the Tsolum River Recovery Plan (TRRP). And of course, our members and volunteers provide invaluable financial support, time and energy to help us with our year round activities.

***Thanks to everyone; we wish you all the best for 2018!***



Pink Salmon at Hatchery in Headquarters Creek 2017

**Like us on Facebook!**



<https://www.facebook.com/tsolum.restoration>

## Projects Update

By Angela Spooner

Work started on two of the Tsolum River's 'Top 3' Recovery Plan priority projects in August 2017. The field season was also busy with repairs to restoration work, riparian planting, upper watershed fish distribution sampling, DNA sampling and pink salmon return counts.

**Priority 1 Project:** We are continuing to build our partnership with the K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) by providing technical support for the lower Tsolum gravel bar removal project. The project will focus on flood protection works on KFN land which contains archaeological sites of interest to the KFN; they are approaching Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to secure 2018-19 funding.



**Priority 2 Project:** The start of the **Dove Creek bedload trap** was delayed in summer 2017 due to access restrictions related to the extreme fire hazard. Once the cooler weather arrived we were able to build the access road thanks to the help from J.R. Edgett Excavating Ltd. We are now poised and ready to start the trap construction in August 2018. This project was made possible thanks to funding from the HCTF, PSF, and financial contributions from our Society.



Lower Dove Creek high quality rearing habitat remains at risk from upper system slope failures but TimberWest is working on de-building some roads to mitigate the sediment influx. The gravel trap is projected to prevent over 1500 cubic meters of sediment from entering lower Dove Creek and the Tsolum River.

**Priority 3 Project:** The mid-Tsolum Live Staking Gravel Bar Stabilization project was funded for 2 years by a RFCPP grant. In summer 2017, classification and suitability assessments were conducted on 25 gravel bars. This assessment will be used to plan live-stake planting which will occur in summer 2018. We are planning on building the access road prior to fire season, and then Dave Polster (RPBio) will provide training for live staking work scheduled for August. KFN and volunteers will help with this planting project. Sound interesting?

Contact Angela Spooner, Project Coordinator, at [trrs.projectcoord@gmail.com](mailto:trrs.projectcoord@gmail.com) if you would like to help with this project.

## Other Activities

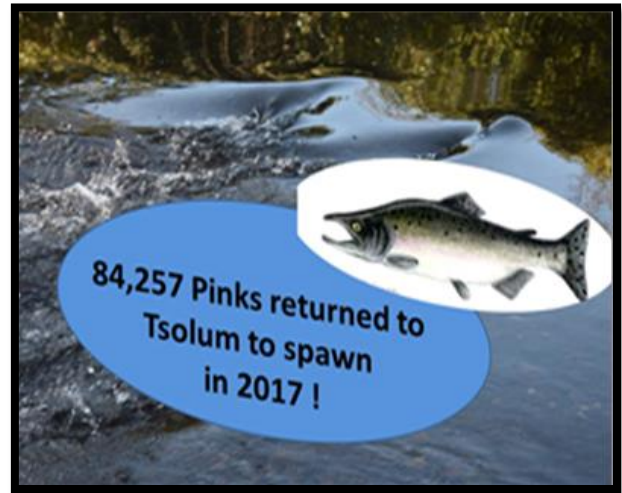
In 2012 a series of Bendway weirs were placed in the lower Tsolum off Stephens Road to prevent bank erosion and to deepen the channel. This past August, the landowner reported some erosion issues, and an assessment revealed that repairs to the weirs were necessary. As part of the new Piercy Road Bridge enhancement commitments, MOTI (Highways) and Knappett Industries helped us to secure large woody debris (trees) along the shore for bank protection and habitat enhancement.

This past summer, our summer student, Celesta Buchanan, worked with VP Dave Morwood to sample rearing fish in the upper watershed and in wetlands to assess fish distribution. This information was added to the existing baseline data and mapped. This work will continue in summer 2018.

## Fall Salmon Counts

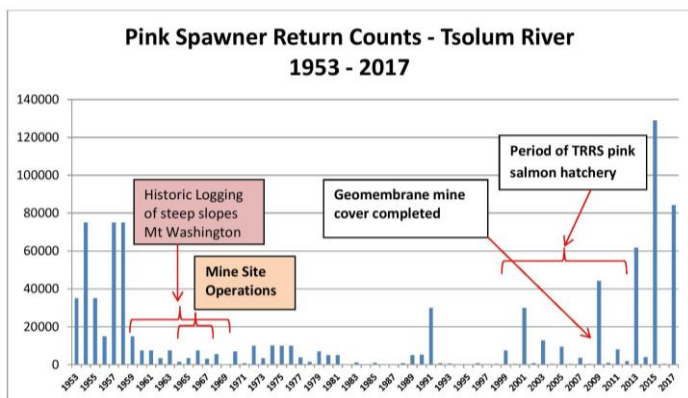
The annual fall Pink Salmon counting team which included Guardian Watchmen, Puntledge Hatchery, Isfeld high school Environment Club students, and other volunteers, counted 84,257 Pink Salmon that returned to spawn! Fish were observed moving into the river as early as August 22, with peak spawning occurring in late September. 2017 marked the “odd year” of the two year pink cycle. Recently the odd years have been highly successful, while in comparison, very few Pink Salmon return to spawn during the even year cycle.

Volunteers also collected DNA samples from pinks in fall 2017 in order to gain genetic baseline information for Tsolum River Pink Salmon. Collecting DNA data adds to the DFO data base and may reveal if there is a distinct Tsolum River Pink Salmon gene pool; during the years when pinks were raised at the Headquarters hatchery, the eggs originated from the Quinsam and Puntledge hatcheries.



## Tsolum River Fishing Closure Continues

There have been increasing reports of people observed fishing in the Tsolum River. We want to remind everyone that the Tsolum River is closed year round to all fishing (including catch and release fishing) and for all species. This closure is highlighted in the BC Freshwater Fishing Regulations. If you observe people fishing in the Tsolum River, and would like to file a report, call 1-877-952-7277 or #7277 on your cell phone to reach the Conservation Officer reporting system. If you have specific questions or concerns, contact us for information. We thank you for following the regulations which will help fish populations to continue to recover. Although the source of toxic run-off has been fixed with the capping of the mine, the year round fishing closure in the Tsolum remains in place. Since the river was remediated only 7 years ago, not enough time has passed to allow for popular angling species such as Cutthroat and Steelhead Trout to fully recover. These longer living species need more time to build in size and population. Salmon runs are also recovering, and are being monitored year round by members of the TRRS.



Pink Salmon Returns To Tsolum River

**Riparian Planting:** In 2017 we planted cedar trees in Tsolum Spirit Park, and over 100 free trees were provided to landowners, to CV Project Watershed for the Simm’s Park restoration project, and to the KFN. We have FREE 2 year old conifer trees available to riverfront landowners! Please contact us if you are interested at [tsolumriver@shaw.ca](mailto:tsolumriver@shaw.ca).

**Volunteers needed for Out-migration:** Volunteers are needed for counting fish at the Rotary Screw Trap in April and May. If you want to learn more or can help, contact Angela at [trrs.projectcoord@gmail.com](mailto:trrs.projectcoord@gmail.com) or phone 250.650.7637

# Summer and Fall Outreach

By Caroline Heim and Laura Ann O'Brien

TRRS had another successful outreach summer and fall season in 2017. We started with attending the popular River Never Sleeps Festival hosted by the Fanny Bay Salmonid Enhancement Society in May and then set up our booth at the CV Farmer's market in early July to continue our bullfrog awareness education. At a neighbourhood bullfrog event later in the summer, we offered and presented a special certificate and monetary reward to Cheri Lamb and Onyx Vaughan-Ogilvie for most bullfrogs caught and destroyed in the Railway Avenue area of Merville. VI Musicfest was a great success with sunny skies and summer student Celesta helping with kids activities including a fish colouring contest, the salmon wheel, a salmon identification game, and the ever popular fish cracker guessing game. Thanks to all Musicfest volunteers for taking the time to help out.

We hosted a late summer public walk through the CV Exhibition and lower Tsolum on August 22, and we were amazed to see hundreds of Pink salmon making their migration on that very day. What a spectacle for the attendees at the walk! The next event was the CV Exhibition in August, which provides us with a great opportunity to connect with the rural community and to spread the word about our achievements and goals.



We co-hosted a BC River's Day event with Comox Valley Nature Kids in September to celebrate the 37<sup>th</sup> year of this event in BC. We had over 50 people show up, and Laura O'Brien gave an informative walk to the confluence of Dove Creek and the Tsolum to view the Pink Salmon.

With school back in session, we offered our Pink Salmon viewing field trips to over 200 elementary school children. In mid-October we took part in École Puntledge Park's 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Salmon Day celebration. And finally we rounded off the year with our 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Streamkeeper Volunteer appreciation dinner, and Tin Town's 10<sup>th</sup> Annual open house event at our shared office in the Conservation Centre.



## AGM coming up and Membership Renewal Reminder

All are welcome to attend our 2018 AGM on Sat., March 3 from 1-3:30pm at the Dove Creek Hall at 3400 Burns Road. Our guest speaker is Jim Irvine, Research Scientist from DFO who will lead a discussion about Pink Salmon odd and even year trends. Come join our group, eat some good food, get caught up on recent and future activities, and renew your membership. We have recently added Paypal/credit card payment options to our website, making it secure and easy for you to make a lump sum donation, or to pay your membership. Our newly printed 20th year anniversary t-shirts, designed by local K'omoks First Nation artist, Randy Frank will be available for sale at the AGM. See you there!

## Ruth Masters 1920- 2017

By Laura Ann O'Brien

Lifetime Comox Valley resident, Ruth Masters, left us bold protest signs, some pretty awesome stories, a spectacular urban woodland park that was her family's homestead, and a concrete example of action for the common good. If you have ever walked and enjoyed the beautiful forests and wetlands at Seal Bay Park, MacDonald Wood, Forbidden Plateau, Strathcona Park, or so many other serene local nature spots, you have Ruth and her tribe of feisty, vocal, mature, 20<sup>th</sup> century environmentalists, or naturalists (a preferable label) to thank. Ruth shared a love of the natural world with her peers, Melda Buchanan (Melda's Marsh at Seal Bay Park), Norma Morton (the Norma Morton Library at the Conservation Center on Rosewall Crescent), Katherine Capes (Capes Park) and many others. These elders from what seems like a faraway era had the guts and foresight to fight to save special places for their ecological value, for both the human and animal kingdoms. They put their minds, bodies, time and money to work to accomplish lasting legacies for all who call the Comox Valley and northern Vancouver Island home now and into the future. They are role models for the following generations tasked with balancing man's expansionist behavior and obsessive quest for natural resources, and excessive profits. Back when Ruth was a girl the magnificent natural world surrounding her modest home in a small Island town must have seemed boundless. The ability to see the big picture and a future beyond one's life on the planet is indeed a gift. Stanley Park in Vancouver is a grand example of that kind of vision. So is Seal Bay Park right here in our collective backyard. Thank you Ruth, Melda, Norma, Katherine and everyone else who helped.

For the physically diminutive woman Ruth was, she packed a serious punch when passionately pursuing her current cause. She called and lobbied politicians on a regular basis on behalf of the trees, animals and ecosystems, organized and participated in peaceful protests and blockades, and played "O Canada" on the harmonica as other protesters and friends were arrested for trying to halt "progress". She herself was arrested in 1995-- not for protecting trees or mountains but a bear! She was an outdoorswoman extraordinaire starting with her family's treks and continuing as an early member of the local mountaineering club, engaging in trail and cabin building at Forbidden Plateau, on the stunning Beaufort Mountains and Strathcona Park, trails that we continue to enjoy today. Her outdoor pursuits also included her love of hiking and camping, retrieving road kill to be brought to local wild animal and bird rescue shelters, and flying above the Glacier and her beloved mountains in a 2-person ultralight plane to celebrate her 97<sup>th</sup> birthday! She was one tough lady -- but totally compassionate regarding the natural world including mountain peaks and valleys, diverse forests, water bodies and animal communities. I think we should all stand up for what we believe in, take positive action for the benefit of nature and the common good wherever and whenever we can, and as Ruth said "Be a leader". She certainly was a "master" at that! If you wish to contribute to Ruth's legacy please consider a donation to the "Ruth Masters Hero Spoon Award", a bursary at North Island College to benefit students taking environmental studies. Donate online at [foundationnic.bc.ca](http://foundationnic.bc.ca) or by mail to NI College Foundation, 2300 Ryan Road, Courtenay, BC V9N 8N6.





**MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**Membership for 1 year: Individual: \$10 Family: \$15**

Please complete form and:

- mail form and cheque to: PO Box 488, Merville, BC V0R 2M0
- email form to [tsolumriver@shaw.ca](mailto:tsolumriver@shaw.ca), and pay online through our website at [www.tsolumriver.org](http://www.tsolumriver.org)
- drop off form and cheque to 2356 Rosewall Crescent, Courtenay, BC between 9-12pm, Monday to Friday (please call 250 897-4670 first)

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you live in the Tsolum River watershed? If yes, which tributary? \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer interests:

- Outmigration – rotary screw trap – March to June
- In-migration – salmon counting – Sep to Oct
- Monitoring – water quality, flow, temperature, turbidity
- Assessments – habitat, riparian, steelhead, etc.
- Tree Planting
- Projects – mainstem and tributaries
- Projects – your neighbourhood
- Events – Earth Day, VI Musicfest, CVEX, Rivers Day, etc.
- Education – watershed, primary schools, field trips, bullfrog
- Committees – outreach or watershed protection
- Social media – website, Facebook, etc.
- Fundraising – government, corporate and individual

**Monthly Pre-Authorized Donation Payments Using VOID cheque**

I want to become a monthly donor of the Tsolum River Restoration Society (“TRRS”), PO Box 488, Merville, BC V0R 2M0 – Canada Revenue Agency Charitable Tax No. 89402 6921 BC0001

I wish to gift \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month (includes membership)

I, the undersigned, hereby authorize my banking institution to charge my account on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of each month and pay the TRRS the sum noted above. This authorization shall be the same as if I personally signed a cheque to the TRRS. I may terminate my participation in this program at any time upon written or email notification to the TRRS.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please sign, print your name and return this form with a VOID cheque by mail or in person. For further information please call 250 897-4670. An annual tax receipt will be issued and mailed to you.